

Procedures Manual

04.39.01 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS POLICY 2018/19

PURPOSE To assist students who may have exceptional difficulty completing their course because of financial considerations

SCOPE All students in line with ESFA guidelines

RESPONSIBILITY Student Welfare and the Finance Department

Introduction

1. This policy is based on the guidance issued by the ESFA and provides a framework in which the College is allowed a degree of freedom to manage the 16-19 Bursary Fund, Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Adult Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund in a way which is most appropriate for the College and its students. The Funding available is for all students who meet the ESFA criteria. Please see the attached diagram which explains the funding available to the different age groups.
2. In order to comply with the ESFA guidance it is necessary for the College to have a written policy, which is available to students so that they are fully aware of how the fund is managed.
3. This policy will be made available to students via the Moodle Procedures Manual library.
4. The decision whether to fund a student through the Bursary Fund or Discretionary Learner Support Fund (the Fund) will be made by Admissions, Student Welfare and Financial Support staff. This policy will be followed when assessing a student's application.
5. Staff who will be responsible for administering the Fund are as follows:
 - The Funds administrator
 - Management Accountant
 - Finance Assistant (Financial Support)
 - Student Welfare Manager
 - Student Welfare Administrator
 - Bursary Administrator
 - College Administrators

A quorum will consist of any two of the above members of staff.

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6. Any student whose attendance is over 50% but who haven't attended in the last 14 days will be referred to the Vice Principal – Student and Learning Support. However, any student whose attendance is under 50% will not be paid; the decision is made by finance with no referral.
7. Students who fail to make academic progress will not be paid.
8. The Funds team will aim to process applications within 14 working days from the time **all** required evidence has been received.

The Purpose of the Fund

The Fund is used to assist students who may have exceptional difficulty completing their course because of financial constraints. For this reason it is necessary that West Suffolk College gives priority to those students who are in most need. The priority groups are:

- Those in care or who have recently left care
 - Those supported by youth offending or on probation
 - Those who receive means tested state benefit (JSA, ESA, WTC, IS, CTC, HB, DSA, GPC and PIP or Universal Credit)
 - Students with learning difficulties or disabilities
 - Refugees
 - Students from the Travelling Community, homeless people (proof in the form of a homelessness statement from the Council will be required).
9. The Fund may help with the following types of expenditure associated with courses being taken at West Suffolk College:
 - Travel costs*
 - Mandatory equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) / uniform costs (items such as new football boots will not be included)
 - Course or exam fees – only in exceptional circumstances**
 - Lunch allowance (loaded on to student membership cards) – For those in priority groups .
 - Help with childcare for students aged 20+

*** and ** See under Awarding Guidelines for Finance Support 2018/19**

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Free College Meals

10. Disadvantaged students aged 16 –18 on 31 August 2018 and students aged between 19 – 25 who are subject to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) on 31 August 2018 may be eligible for a free college meal. Students who are confirmed as eligible, will receive electronic credit or a voucher to the value of £4.25 per day for their meal. The College is only permitted to use the free meals funding allocated by the ESFA to support students who meet the free meals 16-18 eligibility criteria as set out below. The free meals funding cannot be added to other student support funding such as the bursary fund.

Eligibility

11. To be eligible for support through the fund in 2018/19, a student must be an enrolled student as defined by West Suffolk College and have:
- Been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, European Union or Economic European Area (EEA) for purposes other than education for the last three years.
 - 16-18 A household income of less than £19,000 (net income not including Disability Living Allowance and Child Benefit) rising by £2,500 per dependent child within the household up to a maximum of 3 dependent children.
 - 19+ A household income of less than £25,000 (net income not including Disability Living Allowance and Child Bendfit) rising by £2,500 per dependent child within the household up to a maximum of 3 dependent children.
 - Household income £18,000 and below can be awarded 100% of course and exam fees.
 - Household income below £21,000 but more than £18,001 – award 75%.
 - Household income below £25,000 but more than £21,001 – award 50%.
 - Students applying for the Adult Advanced Learning Loan must have received their letter of learning offer before completing an online financial support application to be eligible for funding.
12. Once funding has been fully allocated a waiting list system will be implemented. Funds will then be allocated based on income and not a first come first served basis.

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13. To be eligible for Free College Meals for 16-18 year olds in 2018/19, students or their parent / carers will need to be in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:
- I. Income Support
 - II. Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - III. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - IV. Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - V. The guarantee element of the State Pension Credit
 - VI. Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
 - VII. Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - VIII. Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa.
14. Been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, European Union or Economic European Area (EEA) for purposes other than education for the last three years.

Applications

15. All applications will be filled out and submitted online at www.westsuffolk.ac.uk. Click on Financial Support (on the front page)

The online form must be completed in full and the terms and conditions must be agreed to by ticking the 'Yes' box on the Declaration section of the online form. Appropriate evidence of the income declared on the form should be submitted at the same time as the form. **(Photocopies/Scanned copies only; do not send in original documents)**. The Application form **will not** be processed unless these requirements have been met. In exceptional circumstances assistance can be given by Student Welfare to complete the application process. Evidence must be sent in within 14 days.

16. No applications will be considered after the end of the academic year they relate to.

Proof of identity and income/benefits declared on the application form

17. Students must provide appropriate evidence of the household income they have declared on their application form. This must be current evidence. Photocopies/scanned copies of documents must have all dates and amounts visible. The committee will refuse to accept photocopied documents if they suspect that the original form has been amended or if the copy omits relevant information.

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18. If the income that has been declared is in the form of eligible state benefits the evidence required will be a benefit statement showing current payments or a recent letter from the Department for Works and Pensions, which indicates that benefits are currently being paid.
19. If the income that has been declared is in the form of salary or wages then the evidence required will be March 2018 payslip or a P60 for the 2017/18 tax year.
20. If students are submitting evidence that they or a member of their family is in receipt of Working Tax Credit (WTC) and or Child Tax Credits (CTC) then they will need to provide proof of this (a copy of the full award letter for 2017/18).
21. Evidence required of any other form of income, which has been declared on the form will depend on the type of income. Members of the Committee will use their discretion in assessing the suitability of evidence.

Payments of funds awarded

22. Where applicable costs for Uniform and Equipment will be paid to students when they are awarded funding once they have attended college and their attendance has been confirmed. This will enable the students to purchase the equipment required either independently or through the College shop. Uniform/Equipment in excess of £400 will be reimbursed after 4 weeks once attendance has been confirmed. Uniform and equipment is capped at £600. If a Student withdraws from their course in the first term they must undertake to repay all or part of the monies received, including the return of the items.
23. Additional equipment will need to be ordered and paid for by the student.
24. Travel reimbursements for 19+ students are based on the mileage from their home postcode to the postcode of their main centre of study. Students will only be paid for the days they attend college. It is our aim to pay students monthly, in arrears by bank transfer. This policy helps to protect the Fund from fraudulent claims. The travel amount for 2018/19 has been set at 25p per mile.
25. Any childcare (for children 0-12 years of age) for students aged 20+ must be provided by OFSTED registered child minders or nurseries. **Childcare must be paid for by the student.** Students will receive a payment towards the cost of their childcare, according to their award once a copy of the receipt and invoice from the childcare provider is received. If under 20, students can apply to Care to Learn (Student Welfare can assist with applications).
26. When calculating the students payments for childcare we will take into consideration the amount submitted on the invoice/receipt which may be lower than their award. We will reduce any payments where attendance is less than 90%. The maximum paid for childcare could be £35 per day per child, up to a maximum of 3 children. Students will be reimbursed for childcare costs in term time only.

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27. Payments will be dependent upon a student's level of attendance, currently expected to be 100%. The committee may withdraw funding if attendance and / or progress is unsatisfactory or if there is a question mark about whether or not the student will complete their course of study. Payments can still be made when attendance is below 50% at the discretion of the Funds administrator, where there is good reason to do so, e.g. illness. Students who believe their payment has been unfairly reduced can appeal in writing to the Vice Principal – Student and Learning Support.

| Attendance Thresholds | Payment |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| 100% - 90% | 100% |
| 75% - 89% | 75% |
| 50% - 74% | 50% |
| 0% - 49% | 0% |

28. Any specialist equipment, uniform or other non-consumable products or equipment, which are purchased through the Fund will remain the property of West Suffolk College and should be returned at the end of the course, even if it is only funded in part by the Fund. Practical consideration will however be given to factors such as hygiene, health and safety and wear and tear.
29. Where applicable for students aged 16-18 £100 will be paid into their designated account each half term to help towards transport costs. The Finance department will endeavor to ensure no student suffers undue hardship by ensuring payments are made promptly. Any student who requires short term help while waiting for a bursary award should contact Student Welfare in the first instance for advice. Students should contact their local transport authority for information about applying for travel passes.
30. For students who are entitled to the vulnerable group payment, this will be paid by BACS transfer on a regular basis, but will not exceed £20 per week as this can affect the students benefit claims. The total award for these student is £1200.00 and therefore top up payments will be made each half term.
31. Students undertaking a Traineeship will also receive mileage of 25p per mile for the day(s) that they attend their work placement where they have not already received a payment equal to the County Council's bus pass. A one off payment of £30 towards the purchase of smart clothing for their placement will be provided. (This payment should not be used to purchase PPE as this should be provided by the employer). Payments to students on these days will be approved by the Course Director for their subject area.

Withholding or withdrawal of funding

32. In certain circumstances payments will be withheld or withdrawn from a student. The Fund administrator will use its best endeavors to complete any investigation within 10 working days. This will depend on the individual circumstances but typically payments will be withheld if:

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- There is an allegation and subsequent investigation whether false or incomplete information has been declared on the student's application form.
- The student's school has reported that the student will not achieve their qualification due to poor attendance or poor level of attainment. Students may provide medical or other evidence, where appropriate, to make the committee aware of any reasons for poor attendance or attainment.
- Refunds will be made for the current academic year only to the end of July. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that any receipts have been reimbursed. No refunds will be processed after the last working day of July.

Appeals

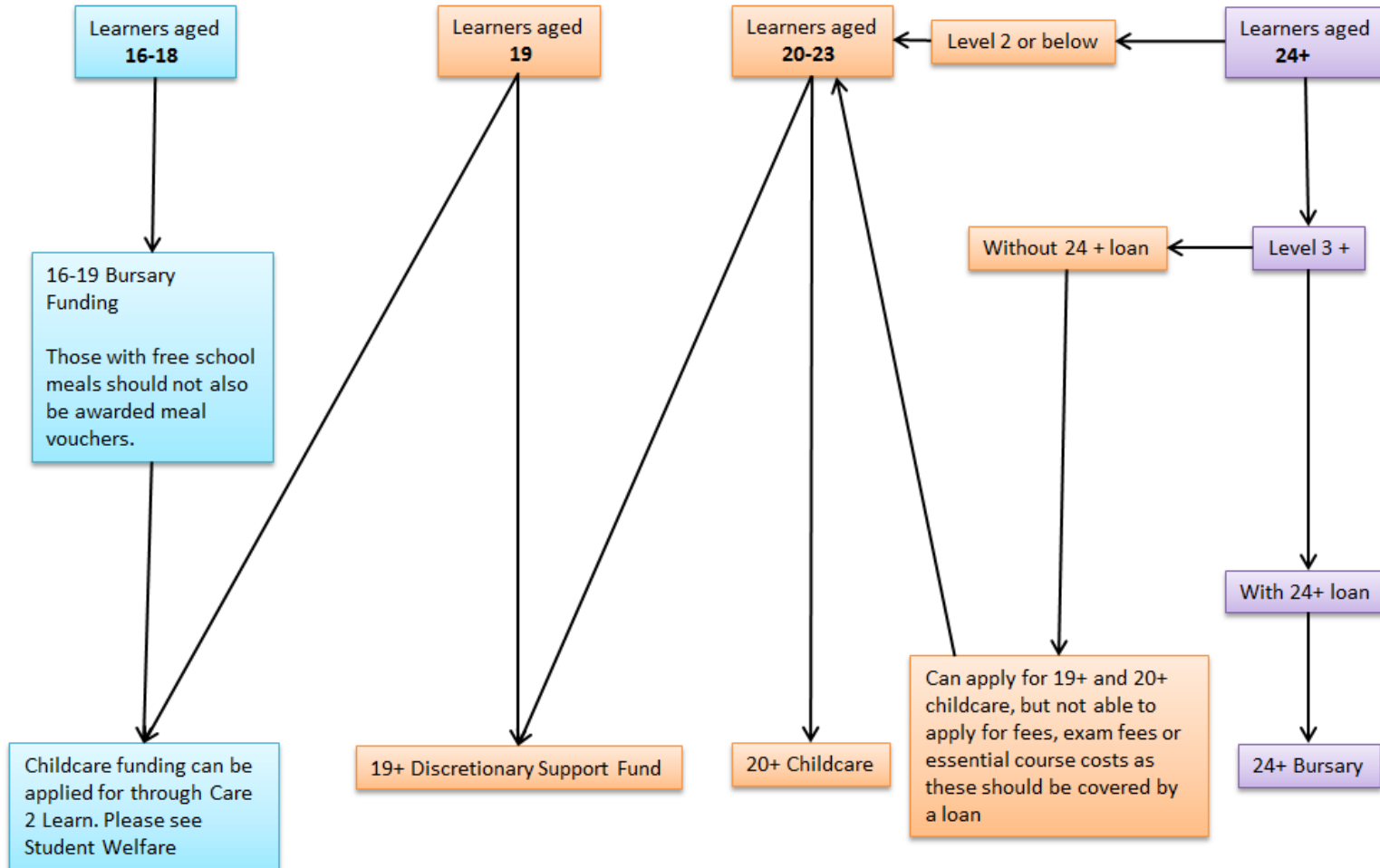
33. If a student believes that they have been treated unfairly or thinks there are special circumstances that should be taken into account regarding their application, then they may appeal via the online appeals process.
34. Applicants to the fund will have the right to appeal against a decision **once only**. They may only make an appeal if they are submitting further information in support of their application.

Please Note: Due to the significant increased demand for financial assistance, West Suffolk College cannot guarantee applicants will receive any or part of funding requested. Students should therefore actively seek alternative financial assistance from other agencies, organisations and funds. The financial help provided is a contribution towards costs. Further information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk

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Financial Support Categories

Please note students ages are as at 31/08/2018



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